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# Tides In Brief

Serving the Norfolk District

Oct. 2006

## Inaugural Issue

### Tides In Brief debuts

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Tides in Brief*. In this publication you will notice a much greater emphasis on keeping **you, the employee**, informed of the events and happenings that are going on around the District; not so much on a project level but more on a personal level that affects you in your everyday life.

*Tides in Brief* will be released on the first Thursday of the first two months in each quarter, while the original *District Tides* will be published on the first Thursday of the last month in the quarter.

*Tides in Brief* will also supply you with tips, or as we like to say "TIB-bits," on how to handle

different situations that life may throw at you. This first issue is no exception! Check out the Suicide Watch article or even the Halloween Safety tips piece; both are full of useful information.

The other thing you will notice in *Tides in Brief* is the length of the articles. There is a reason the title of the newsletter includes "...in Brief". The articles are going to be quick and snappy so that you can read the information quickly and get on with your day.

We hope you enjoy this publication and remember: if you know of a good deed, event or a possible interesting story, let us know!

## Call for Stories

### The Tides in Brief staff needs you



With a District of over 400 employees, it's hard to keep track of exactly what is going on. This is where you, the reader, come in. If you have a story idea, know of a fellow District employee who is doing something exceptional, or know

of an upcoming event that has District-wide appeal, please contact your *Tides in Brief* staff. We also accept and encourage article submissions from District employees.

Articles and ideas can be sent to [patrick.j.bloodgood@usace.army.mil](mailto:patrick.j.bloodgood@usace.army.mil). Remember that articles must have District-wide application and please try to keep text to one or two paragraphs.

## Sick Leave

### OPM revises rules for family sick leave

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently revised the rules concerning the use of sick leave to provide care for a family member.

Effective Oct. 1, the requirement for employees to maintain a minimum sick leave balance of 80 hours will no longer apply when employees use sick leave to provide care for a family member, make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. Employees can now use sick leave for those reasons no matter how many hours they have saved. These rule changes

are designed to assist employees in balancing their work and family responsibilities.

The maximum amount of family sick leave that an employee may take in a leave year, however, is 104 hours or 13 work days for general family care or bereavement purposes, and 480 hours or 12 work weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

Any questions may be directed to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) at ext. 7210.

### Office 'TIB-bits'

From CPAC:

#### Change your benefits online

Remember, all benefit transactions are completed through the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C). You can access your personal information and make changes to your benefits through the ABC-C Web site at [www.abc.army.mil](http://www.abc.army.mil). You will need a password and login to access your personal information.

From Security:

#### Not your supermarket brand of spam

Be aware of the spam e-mail you may receive. Many times the e-mails are looking for personal account information, or for you to send money to receive more money. These e-mails are nothing more than scams, so stay away! If you receive them on your work account, please forward them to Chief of Security Jim Gorka and then delete them from your in-box.

From Executive Office:

#### NSPS for supervisors

Mandatory National Security Personnel System (NSPS) training for supervisors is coming Oct. 16 and 17. This training is for all those managers who will be entering into the NSPS system in November.

From Office of Counsel:

#### Hatch Act awareness

November is coming quick and it means elections! Remember the Hatch Act is still alive and well. Make sure you abide by it; if you have any questions, contact General Counsel Joe Loschi in Office of Counsel. Remember that over 31 government employees have lost their jobs by not abiding by the Hatch Act.

For more information on your rights as it pertains to election activities as a federal employee visit [http://www.osc.gov/ha\\_fed.htm](http://www.osc.gov/ha_fed.htm)

## Office 'TIB-bits'

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### Financial Disclosure

This notice is for all employees who are required to file an OGE Form 450, Confidential Financial Disclosure Form annually. The Office of Government Ethics (OGE) has waived this year's annual filing of the OGE Form 450 because the form is being revised. Instead of filing by October 31, annual filers have until February 15, 2007 to file the new OGE Form 450.

The Office of Counsel will notify all affected employees in January when the revised form is ready for distribution. The January submission will include a 15-month period from October 1, 2005 to January 2006.

From Logistics Management Office:

### Travel order preparations in CEFMS

Here's a tip for you brave souls who venture into CEFMS to prepare your own or other people's travel orders. Paying attention to a few key areas can help you avoid headaches and problems later.

a) If you are traveling by plane using your Government Travel Card (Individually Billed Account):

- Select the **"Y"** option in the **Transportation Paid by Traveler** section
- Select the **"CP"** option in the **Mode of Travel** section.
- Select **Cost Item "3"** for the "Commercial" airline cost code.

b) If you are charging your airline travel to the Centrally Billed Account; i.e. the District's centrally-billed "Corporate Account," which is restricted:

- Select the **"N"** option in the **Transportation Paid by Traveler** section
- Select the **"TP"** option in the **Mode of Travel** section.
- Select **Cost Item "4"** for the "Government Paid" travel cost code

**The most important tip:** Ya gotta have the funding for the travel, so check that out first.

## Viva Espaniol

### Hispanic Heritage Month 2006: Sept. 15 – Oct. 15

Since 1988 the time-span between Sept. 15 and Oct. 15 has been designated as National Hispanic Heritage Month. During this time the United States of America celebrates the culture and traditions of Americans who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The date of September 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it coincides with the



anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

In support of this celebration, the Norfolk District has a special display set up in the lobby. Marina Moure, An Argentinian-born local business owner, will be the guest speaker addressing the District in the multipurpose room on Oct. 10 at 2 p.m.

## A watchful eye

### Suicide Prevention: Something to be aware of

On Sept. 13, the Norfolk District held a suicide prevention seminar in which employees were informed about the different symptoms to look for in a person who is contemplating suicide. Note that suicide is the eighth-leading cause of death in the United States.

The following tips are a sampling of symptoms to be aware of when interacting with fellow employees, family members or friends.

#### The Warning Signs

- If they talk about dying
- If they experience a loss (family member, divorce)
- If you notice a change in their personality
- If you notice a change in behavior
- If they have a change in sleep or eating patterns
- If they express a level of hopelessness or helplessness
- If they start giving away personal items
- If they arrange for the care of pets
- If they have a substance abuse problem

If you suspect a fellow employee or loved one is thinking about attempting suicide, contact the Employee Assistance Program, which is a service provided to the District by the Bon Secours Hospital System, at 398-2374. Or you can call the National Suicide Prevention Life-Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

## NAD Commander

### BG Semonite makes District first visit



Brig. Gen. Todd T. Semonite discusses beach restoration with Col. Dionysios Anninos during the general's visit on Oct. 3. (Photo by: Patrick Bloodgood)

Not even a month after taking the position as Commanding General, North Atlantic Division, Brig. Gen. Todd T. Semonite is on the road and visiting the Districts that are under his command. The first stop on his rounds through the area of operations for the North Atlantic Division was here in the Hampton Roads area at the Norfolk District.

The new Commanding General visited with the employees in the Waterfield Building and ventured out to meet with different community leaders and agencies in Hampton Roads. During his stay, a Town-hall meeting was held where the general presented awards and addressed the District as a whole.

## Halloween Safety

### The ghouls and ghosts are coming

Halloween is coming! The little princesses, firefighters, vampires and ghosts will be out in full force going door-to-door trying to collect as many treats as their bags can hold.



Remember, while driving around on Oct. 31, take extra precautions. Often, the little ones are too focused on getting candy and do not look out for on-coming traffic. If you have little ones that are going to be traversing the neighborhood, be sure to follow a few safety tips to keep their night safe and fun!

#### If the kiddies are going out alone make sure they...

- Wear a watch and know when their curfew is
- Carry a cell phone or have enough money to call home if needed
- Don't eat any candy until they get home and you inspect (not eat) it first
- Know and tell you which neighborhoods they are going to
- Travel in a group

#### When traversing from house to house

- Be careful when crossing streets
- Walk, don't run, and stay on the sidewalks; if sidewalks are not available, walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic
- Do not cross yards and lawns where unseen objects or the uneven terrain can present a tripping hazard.

#### Costume Safety

- Make sure the costume is made with fire-resistant material
- Choose bright colors or add reflective tape
- Make sure the costume fits and isn't dragging, posing a tripping hazard
- Wear warmer clothes under the costume if it is cold outside

## Command information monitor

### Lobby goes 55-inch high definition

Over the course of the month of October, the multipurpose room will receive a new addition. Many sports fans dream about having this particular addition in their very own living rooms. However, the 55-inch Hitachi plasma-screen-monitor will hang from the wall across from the elevators and serve as a message board for employees.

The screen will run a consistent slide show announcing different events and messages that pertains to the District as

a whole. The plasma screen will also have cable access and can be changed over from the slide show to television in the event of major local, national and world events.

In conjunction with the screen, a set of guidelines and procedures will be announced for you, the employee, to submit announcements for the screen. Keep in mind that the guidelines will be pretty stringent in what will be allowed and what won't.

## District Retirements

### Retirees total 99 years of Federal service

Congratulations to the three employees who have made it to the finish line and are enjoying retirement. May fair seas and following winds always be with you!

Bruce F. Williams	32 years 3 months	Sept. 30
Linda B. Bohon	37 years 8 months	Sept. 29
James E. Brogdon	29 years 1 month	Sept. 30



## Super CAC

### 'Universal' ID card part of federal security upgrades

WASHINGTON (Army News Service) – Starting Oct. 27, new identification cards will be issued to Defense Department employees to help standardize workforce identification and security access systems across the government, according to a senior Defense Department official.

The new "super CAC" ID cards will be issued to employees over the next three years as the old cards reach their expiration dates. "This card will eventually take the place of our access badges through attrition and not mass reissue," confirmed the District's Chief of Security and Law Enforcement, Jim Gorka. "We will have to issue the cards first and then update the card reader software. It's going to take time."

The new cards interface with a secure, encrypted credentialing database and are interoperable for personal identification as well as access to federal buildings and facilities. However, each facility will still determine who will be authorized access.

## Comings and Goings

### A warm welcome and heartfelt goodbye

#### Welcome Aboard!

Michael A. Roach	Ft. Lee/ DSCR	June
Anthony Witherspoon	LMO	Aug.
Dwight McKinney	Ft. Lee/A.P. Hill	Aug.

#### You will be missed!

Robert Hessel	to Fort Worth District	June
David Parsons	to Department of the Army	July
Thomas Szelest	to Seattle District	Sept.
Mark Bishop	to Wilmington District	Aug.
Betty Burton	to Jacksonville District	Aug.
Marlo Camon	to Mobile District	Sept.
Brian Boyton	to Europe District	Sept.
Carlo DiGiovanni	to the Coast Guard	Sept.

## Closing the books

### Happy New Year! Fiscal Year 07 is here

October 1, marks the start of a new fiscal year. Without the hard-work of those in the administrative sections, the District wouldn't accomplish the closing out of one fiscal-year and the beginning of a new.

A few last minute heroics, the sacrifice of a Saturday, lots of caffeine and some serious brain power helped to get the District to the finish line. When traversing the Waterfield Building be sure to say thank you to those who often work behind-the-scenes but who are instrumental in keeping the Norfolk District on task.



### Did you know?

## Teams include kickball and marathons

### Kickball, anyone?

The Norfolk District has an unofficial kickball team. That's right; ten employees are members of the team which plays at the Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base on Thursdays. Games start between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., depending on whether the team is scheduled for the early or late game. This past season, the team finished in fourth place in its league. Team member Laura Schreiber encourages employees to come out to support the team and says they may be recruiting for new members when this season ends and the next one begins. For more information about the team, including the name, which we just didn't feel we could publish in *TIB*, contact Laura Schreiber or Jon Reyes.

### Come on out, all you runners

A team from the Norfolk District is being assembled to run in a half-marathon next spring, in an event called the "Dismal Swamp Stomp Half Marathon," scheduled to occur on April 14. Currently, eight District employees plus some family members are signed up to participate in the run. If you are interested in joining the team, see Leslie Leonard in Regulatory.

### Share your knowledge

Do you have an event or interesting little known fact that readers might like to know about? Please contact Patrick Bloodgood in Public Affairs so that it can be included in the "Did you know" column of *Tides In Brief*.

### Brain Teaser

## Pump up your vocabulary

Test your vocabulary power by matching the word in the left column with the correct definition in the right column.

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1. bagatelle  | A. an amateur enthusiast, a dabbler         |
| 2. craven     | B. derogatory, disparaging                  |
| 3. dilettante | C. winding, crooked, twisted                |
| 4. jocular    | D. temperamental, volatile                  |
| 5. mercurial  | E. resentment, displeasure                  |
| 6. pejorative | F. humorous, displeasure                    |
| 7. tortuous   | G. a trifle, something of little importance |
| 8. umbrage    | H. cowardly                                 |

Answers:

1-g, 2-h, 3-a, 4-d, 5-c, 6-b, 7-f, 8-e

Courtesy *Communication Briefings*, May 2005

### Combined Federal Campaign

## Charities need your help! CFC kicks off this month



The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is starting for the Norfolk District on Oct. 12. The donation books which lists all the available charities will go out to employees around the same time. CFC will last for 6 weeks this year. For more information, this year's CFC coordinator is Vince Cotton and can be contacted at 201-7054

### TSP news

## It's your money... are you maxing out?

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) annual limit on elective deferrals for Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions is \$15,000 for 2006. You are strongly encouraged to check your TSP year-to-date contributions under the "deductions" section of your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) to ensure that your contributions do not exceed the \$15,000 limit prior to the end of the pay year.

When the maximum contribution limit has been reached, your employee contributions to TSP will be suspended for the remainder of the year. If you are a Federal Employment Retirement System (FERS) employee, your agency matching contributions will also be suspended.

Those employees over the age of 50 will still be able to continue to participate in the TSP Catch-up program even if they exceed the \$15,000 limit set by the IRS.

For employees who are in FERS, it is very important for you to ensure that you are making employee contributions throughout the entire year to avoid losing agency matching contributions.

You may change your contribution election at any time via the ABC-C systems. For more information on both TSP and the annual limits on elective deferrals follow the links provided. Any further questions can be answered by calling the Army Benefits Center toll-free, at (877) 276-9287.

- <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/oc91-13w.pdf>
- <https://www.abc.army.mil>

### Upcoming events

## Welfare Council calendar of events

October brings us one month closer to the holiday season. Thanksgiving is one month away and there are plenty of needy families in Hampton Roads. So with that need in place, the Welfare Council is holding a canned food drive starting on Oct. 26. Prepackaged food bags will also be available to purchase for donation. Donations go to the food bank and help needy people in the area.

Also on Oct. 26, the Council will be holding a bake sale. If you have a knack for baking, you can make a dish and bring it in for others to enjoy or just bring a couple bucks and support the Welfare Council as they fund special events that take place within the District

On the last day of October, the Welfare Council will be celebrating a Fall Festival. Events for the day will include a costume contest, basket raffle and free cookies and cider!